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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF MEETS WITH CODELS REYES AND
TIERNEY

Classified By: Charge Peter Bodde 1.5 (b), (d).

11. (U) Codel Reyes -- Congressman Silvestre Reyes (D-TX); Congressman Rush Holt (D-NJ); and Congressman Darrel Issa (R-CA) -- and Codel Tierney -- Congressman John Tierney (D-MA); Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN); Congressman George Miller (D-CA); and Congressman Patrick McHenry (R-NC) -- called on President Musharraf on April 3.

FIGHTING THE TALIBAN AND AQ

12. (S/NF) Answering a question from Congressman Tierney, Musharraf acknowledged that the Taliban were active on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and that al Qaeda was operating in North and South Waziristan and in Bajaur. The President explained that the population of the Waziristans was less than one percent of the entire population of Pakistan, and that the Waziristans were the most remote part of the country. He also noted that Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden were probably in a remote area of Bajaur or across the border in Afghanistan staying with Hekmatyar sympathizers. Several times during the meeting, Musharraf stressed his commitment to working with the U.S. to find both men.

13. (S/NF) Musharraf was frustrated by Western and Afghan criticism of Pakistan's efforts on the Afghan border. He reviewed some of the challenges to securing the border, including high mountains and almost no road network. In an attempt to address some of those challenges, Pakistan was fencing some parts of the border and was reinforcing military operations in the region.

14. (C) Musharraf complained that some Western commentators seemed to think that the Taliban were generally Pakistani, or that the core of the Taliban's support was in Pakistan. Musharraf noted that the militants fighting the Coalition were largely Afghans, and that the Taliban's strength was in Afghanistan. He reminded the representatives that, during the 1990s, Mullah Omar and the Taliban had controlled 90

percent of Afghanistan. He said that the same Taliban elements who had defeated Turks, Uzbeks, and other Northern Alliance members were still in Afghanistan and were the core of the forces fighting the Coalition. He said that even if Taliban militants were not crossing from Pakistan, Afghan Pashtuns who had supported and fought with the Taliban through the 1990s would be fighting against the Coalition.

¶15. (S/NF) Musharraf acknowledged that Taliban militants had sympathizers in Pakistan who were hiding them, providing medical help, and supporting them in other ways. Pakistan was committed to choking off support from Pakistan to the Taliban. He particularly mentioned shutting down training camps for suicide bombers. That said, Musharraf emphasized that ISAF had to root out the core of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

RECENT ANTI-MILITANT ACTIONS

¶16. (S/NF) According to Musharraf, the Government had been encouraging schisms between foreigners living in FATA and the local population. As a result, local tribesmen had so far killed 250 Uzbeks in South Waziristan. The government was providing clandestine support to the locals, including artillery fire. A large group of Uzbeks were trapped on a ridge near Wana, surrounded by local militias, according to the President.

¶17. (S/NF) Musharraf reported that the government was working to create enmity between locals and foreigners in North Waziristan. "I think Al Qaeda will be on the run. They are already on the run," said the President.

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¶18. (S/NF) The President noted that the Pakistan Military recently re-deployed two brigades from the Indian border to the Waziristans, including into the Mir Ali area, where he said "big wigs" were hiding. He said the Pakistan Military had "sealed off" Mir Ali.

FATA POLITICAL AGREEMENTS

¶19. (C) Musharraf admitted the North Waziristan jirga agreement had, so far, been 30-50 percent successful. He said that implementation difficulties did not necessarily mean the agreement had been a bad one. "Military action will not work," he noted, stressing the need for political solutions as part of an overall strategy. No agreement would provide 100 percent results, but that truth was not a reason to dispense with political agreements. According to the President, the government was continuing to appeal to Pashtun honor in upholding the agreement. He believed the appeal to honor would eventually bear greater fruit.

¶110. (C) On the recently reported Bajaur undertaking, Musharraf stressed that Bajaur elders had approached the government with an offer or "undertaking" to attempt to control militant activity, not the other way around. He believed the efforts of the elders were a good sign and should be considered.

TALIBAN IN QUETTA

¶111. (S/NF) Congressman Tierney asked about the security situation in Quetta. Musharraf explained that, of four important Taliban commanders, three were Afghans who moved back and forth across the border. He believed Mullah Omar had not been in Pakistan since he was a teenager. Musharraf reported that U.S. and Pakistani intelligence agencies were tracking Mullah Omar, along with Dadullah Lang and Haqqani. The one Pakistani militant leader -- Baitullah Mehsud -- was in South Waziristan. He said that Baitullah Mehsud was encouraging suicide attacks, including against Pakistan military targets. "We must get him. We will get him," promised Musharraf.

AFGHAN REFUGEES

¶12. (C) Musharraf said that there were no "local" Taliban in Balochistan. He said the Taliban there were all Afghan refugees. The refugee camps were a continuing security problem, noted Musharraf. He emphasized Pakistan's desire to close camps and to encourage refugees to repatriate.

FATA DEVELOPMENT

¶13. (C) Musharraf reported that his government had already provided USD 100 million for FATA development. He said he was working to strengthen political agents and the FATA Development Authority in order to enable further development efforts. He was also working on improving the capacity of the Frontier Corps and the Levies (tribal police) to support the political agents.

EXTREMISM

¶14. (C) Musharraf described Pakistan's political future as a tussle between moderates and extremists. He was convinced the "people" -- particularly the rural masses who made up 60 percent of Pakistan's population and with whom Western observers seldom interacted -- would defeat extremism. He predicted that in the next election, moderate parties would prevail throughout Pakistan, including in the NWFP and Balochistan. (Note: The religious parties currently control

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the NWFP government and are part of the ruling coalition in Balochistan. End Note.) Musharraf explained that religious parties had done better than expected in the last election because of public sentiment against the U.S. actions in Afghanistan, but that the NWFP and Balochistan populations were disenchanted with the actions of the religious parties since they assumed power.

ELECTIONS

¶15. (C) In responding to a question from Congressman Miller, Musharraf promised that the coming general election would be fair and "totally transparent." Musharraf cautioned the codels not to confuse partisan campaign tactics with factual complaints about the election system. While it was true that both his supporters and detractors were complaining about names being struck off the voter roles, the voter registration project was designed to end historic patterns of fraud, where some people would have 10 identification cards and vote 10 times. He said the government had already issued 50 million new fraud-proof identification cards, and that anyone with a card could appear at any election commission site to register to vote.

DEMOCRACY

¶16. (C) Democracy was more than just elections, said Musharraf. He had introduced true democracy to Pakistan by establishing democratically elected local governance systems that gave the population experience in representative democracy. He had created guaranteed women's seats at the local council and National Assembly level, and had guaranteed religious minority representation at numbers greater than their percentage of the population. In 1999, Pakistan offered one television channel; today, the population could access 43 stations. The press, he noted, was free.

¶17. (C) He had created an independent election commission and had invited all political parties to nominate commissioners. The opposition had failed to nominate anyone. He had created a National Security Council including provincial, national, and senior military representatives to encourage healthier cooperation between civilians and the military and to try to prevent the kinds of stresses that have led in the past to coups d'etat.

¶18. (C) Musharraf agreed with several members of Congress that Pakistani political parties lacked internal democracy. He said he had tried to encourage more democratic structures in political parties, but noted he had not met with success. When asked about the potential return of Benazir Bhutto or Nawaz Sharif, Musharraf demurred.

THE UNIFORM

¶19. (C) Answering pointed questions about whether he would remove his uniform before the next election, the President responded that he would make a final decision on the issue closer to the election. That said, Musharraf emphasized that the electoral assembly would vote freely on who would be the next President whether or not he was wearing his uniform. Musharraf also explained that his uniform had allowed him to ensure prompt reaction to the earthquake; had enabled military action in FATA; and expedited military responses to infrastructure emergencies like failed bridges. Historically, he said, civilian governments had much slower and more cumbersome responses from the military.

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